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Emile Duclaux's Pasteur: The History of a Mind*

A number of good biographies of Pasteur have familiarized English readers with his life and character. Here, however, another phase of his personality is presented—his mental life, written by his student and co-worker Duclaux. The author's purpose, didactic rather than purely biographical, has been to trace the working of Pasteur's mind in his conflicts with old prejudices and his pioneer development of new concepts; more particularly to show his mode of clear deductive reasoning from facts.

The book appears to have been almost unknown to American and English workers, for whom it has been translated by Smith and Hedges, with a number of interesting additions to the original. The personality of Duclaux, his life and works are described in a vivid introduction by the senior translator, who has also appended a series of brief, characterizing word portraits of persons referred to in the text, with a comprehensive index not present in the original. An unusually complete collection of photographs of Pasteur at various stages of his career has been added.

The book is divided into eight parts, and takes up Pasteur's studies on crystallography, fermentation, spontaneous generation, silkworm diseases, the etiology of microbial diseases, and his development of the concepts of viruses, vaccines and immunity. In each subject Duclaux first gives the reader a clear perspective of the state of the various current ideas and facts then known, and then discusses Pasteur's own researches and concepts—derived experimentally—and the discoveries to which they led. The controversies and discussions with contemporary workers are written in a colloquial, readable style that has been well retained in the translation. The reader is brought directly into the atmosphere of the time—its vague ideas and gropings on the threshold of a new science, which we can scarcely realize in our present development of bacteriology.

Through his close association with Pasteur, Duclaux was

* Translated by Erwin F. Smith and Florence Hedges. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia.

enabled to set forth in detail the questions arising in Pasteur's mind in the course of an investigation, and his methods of answering them by experiment. It is from this standpoint particularly that the book should prove of unique value to the student taking up research in the biological sciences, who wants training in the use of the experimental method and interpretation as practiced by a scientific mind of the highest type, as well as the technique to which most research teachers are solely addicted. It has not the usual dryness of a textbook—the play of logic, suspense and triumphant experiment reads like a Dumas. Duclaux has written a most inspiring and charming book, and it would have been a loss indeed had it not been rescued and rendered available to English readers.—HARRY BRAUN.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB

MARCH 24, 1920

A meeting of the Club was held at the New York Botanical Garden at 3.30 P.M. Professor R. A. Harper presided. There were 19 persons present.

The minutes of the meetings held February 25 and March 10 were adopted.

Mr. Ludlow Griscom and Mr. Elba E. Watson were proposed and elected to membership.

The appointment of Dr. Michael Levine as Chairman of the Field Committee, instead of Dr. F. W. Pennell, was announced.

The scientific program consisted of a discussion by Mr. Norman Taylor of the flora of Mount Marcy, New York, above timber-line. Twice during the season of 1919 did Mr. Taylor, in coöperation with others studying the vegetation of the state, visit the summit of Mount Marcy. Timber-line was noted at 4,300 feet altitude, and the factors controlling this were considered. Various floras occur on bog land, dry slopes, rock outcrops, etc., and a list of all species seen were made. This was compared with the list made about 1880 by the late Dr. C. F. Peck.

Only 67 species were found above timber-line, and of these